Cathy Caruth's Trauma Theory and Contemporary Indian Fiction: A Study

Synopsis

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Submitted by

Pushpneet Kaur

Under the Supervision of

Prof. V. Premlata

Department of English Studies, Faculty of Arts

Dayalbagh Educational Institute (Deemed to be University)

Dayalbagh Agra-282005

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Literature anticipates life. It does not copy it but moulds it to its purpose.

- Oscar Wilde, *The Decay of Lying*

Literature is an artistic recreation of human life and this world. Literary works depict both the darker and the brighter sides of the world and life. Therefore, literature never fails to reflect the particular period and related situation of life of that time. Similarly, when the usual flow of life is disturbed by some unusual activities, literature cannot de-link itself from the happenings. People often turn to writing and documenting their pangs of misery whenever a catastrophe takes place.

Ever since man has existed in this world, he has been subjected to various atrocities such as war, terrorism, communal violence, natural disasters, and sexual abuse. The past century bears witness to devastating atrocities such as the two World Wars, Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the two nuclear bomb blasts. These atrocities may seem physical at the surface level, but they often leave a deep psychological imprint on a man's mind leading him to suffer trauma.

For the first time in 1693, the word 'trauma' surfaced, originating from the Greek word *titrōskein*, meaning 'wound'. Initially, the word 'trauma' implied only physical injuries, but gradually the expression has acquired connotations that go far beyond the physical sphere. In the present time, it refers to the internal wound that is, a wound on a person's psyche.

Trauma Studies gained a fresh impetus only after the occurrence of the two World Wars. Soldiers evidently showed the symptoms of what was then called 'shell shock'. They exhibited symptoms like long-term depression, anxiety, nightmares, fear, and restlessness. The Holocaust too added an important dimension to the study of trauma. The struggles and horrors of the concentration camp survivors were hard to imagine. The enormity of events like these led to the founding of Trauma Studies in literature.

Roger Luckhurst in "Mixing Memory and Desire: Psychoanalysis, Psychology and Trauma Theory" describes trauma as "Something that enters the psyche that is so unprecedented or overwhelming that it cannot be processed or assimilated by usual mental processes. We have, as it were nowhere to put it, and so it falls out of our conscious memory, yet is still present in our mind like an intruder or a ghost" (499).

In simple words, trauma is a highly emotional and psychological response to an event or experience that is deeply frightening and devastating. The Oxford English Dictionary defines trauma as "a mental condition that is caused by severe shock, especially when the harmful effects last for a long time" or "an unpleasant experience that makes you feel upset and/or anxious." Cathy Caruth, in her ground-breaking work *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narratives and History* (1996), defines trauma as "In its most general definition, trauma describes an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, and uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other uncontrolled phenomenon"(11).

This implies that the event that causes trauma does not affect the individual immediately. Instead, the effects are seen much later after the horrifying incident is long over. Therefore, the response to trauma is often delayed and occurs through the survivor's repetitive hallucinations and nightmares. Sigmund Freud in his book *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* explains trauma as "It is not, like the wound of the body, a simple healable event, but rather an event...not locatable to the original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature – the way that it was precisely not known in the first instance – returns to haunt the survivor later on" (4).

Therefore, trauma is an injury to a person's psyche. It ruptures the person's sense of self and causes psychological disorientation. It leaves a deep imprint on the person's mind. The psychological symptoms of trauma remain even after the physical injuries have healed.

Usually, trauma is an outcome of objective events, but its response is mostly subjective in nature. A catastrophic event may befall the whole community, but each person who experiences it, reacts differently. Many people recover from trauma with time if given proper medical treatment and thus do not suffer long-term effects. Some people however, after experiencing a traumatic event, will go on to develop psychological problems right after the event is over. In this regard, Jon Allen, a psychologist and author of *Coping with Trauma: A Guide to Self Understanding* (2005) explains that a traumatic experience has two components in it: the objective and the subjective.

> It is the subjective experience of the objective events that constitutes the trauma...The more you believe you are endangered, the more traumatized you will be… Psychologically, the bottom line of trauma is overwhelming emotion and a feeling of utter helplessness. There may or may

not be bodily injury, but psychological trauma is coupled with physiological upheaval that plays a leading role in the long-range effects (Allen 14).

Though the scope of trauma expanded first in the field of psychology, in the past decades, it has paved its way into the vast domain of literature in the form of 'Trauma Studies'. Trauma studies aims to explore the impact of trauma in the field of literature by considering and analysing an individual's cultural and sociological context. Trauma Theory in literature was developed in the 1990s by scholars like Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Felman and Geoffery H. Hartman. An interdisciplinary approach towards trauma was initiated by Cathy Caruth with her collection *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995). After her interest in trauma studies deepened, Caruth wrote *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* in 1996.

Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience* is considered a ground-breaking work in the field of trauma studies. She is also the pioneer of Trauma Theory in literature. Currently, she is professor of English and Comparative Literature at Cornell University. As a trauma theorist, Caruth believes that literature and trauma are deeply entwined. She believes that literature is strongly related to trauma in ways that are yet to be explored.

Caruth, in her Trauma Theory, relies heavily on Freud's notion of trauma which he presented in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and *Moses and Monotheism*. Caruth believes that these two works are significant in understanding human survival in the wake of trauma. She notes that the trauma-causing event is so violent and sudden that it is not 'fully known' in the first place. Its impact is realized only after the event is long over and repeats itself in the form of nightmares and flashbacks. Caruth explores the representation of trauma and she believes that it is not so easy to articulate.

Further, she points out that the effect of trauma lies in its 'belatedness'. When an individual experiences a traumatic event, it does not get fully registered in his/her consciousness. It comes into existence only after the event is over. In a similar stream, Caruth places Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and argues that it is a historical phenomenon in which the traumatic experience repeatedly haunts the survivor. She writes, "What returns to haunt the victim, these stories tell us, is not only the reality of the violent event but also the reality of the way that its violence has not yet been fully known" (6).

As Caruth puts it, the general understanding of PTSD reflects "the direct imposition on the mind of the unavoidable reality of horrific events, the taking over of the mind, physically and neurobiologically, by an event that it cannot control" (58).

Caruth's notion of 'belatedness' posits a central position in her Trauma Theory. She supports the concept of 'belatedness' by saying that a traumatic event becomes a 'missed encounter' for the individual. Because it is missed, it lacks a specific place in a person's conscious mind. So trauma is understood through its very 'absence,' the absence of something the victim does not fully assimilate. It becomes difficult for the survivors to articulate their experiences directly. Caruth, therefore, supports the means of literature through which the unsaid and unheard can be understood. She favours literary representations of the traumatic event. She says that literature helps us understand what cannot be claimed by simple and straightforward means. It is, therefore, the indirectness of literature and its metaphorical language that forces the transmission of traumatic history.

Caruth then argues that the traumatic experience makes the survivor enter the realm which is nearer to death. It makes people feel insecure about themselves and their loved ones. Traumatic experience results in changing their whole attitude towards life. It changes the definition of self for a person. Caruth says that when a survivor survives a traumatic event, it is not too simple for him/her to mingle with everyday life. Neither can they deal with the deaths of the masses nor can they face their own survival. Trauma survivors do not find glory in being the 'survivor'. Caruth writes, "I would suggest, is thus a kind of double telling, the oscillation between a crisis of death and the correlative crisis of life: between the story of the unbearable nature of an event and the story of the unbearable nature of its survival" (7).

The aforementioned concepts are the key concepts of Caruth's Trauma Theory which the proposed study attempts to apply to the select literary works of contemporary Indian fiction in English.

Since independence, India has witnessed various heinous acts of violence that have disturbed the normal pace of people's lives. Specifically, Kashmir has been the centre of violence and terror. The insurgencies in Kashmir are due to the on-going conflict between India and Pakistan in acquiring the 'princely' states of Jammu and Kashmir. The growing tensions between the militants and Indian

armed forces lead to enormous destruction in the lives of Kashmiris. In such a state of affairs, the common people of Kashmir have suffered. Innocent people are being victimized amidst the detrimental separatist propaganda. So far, the conflicts between the military and separatists have caused massive destruction of property, money and lives. The people of Kashmir live with a sense of powerlessness suffused by the constant fear of violence.

Another heinous act of violence took place in June 1984 when the then Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi, ordered an attack on the holy shrine of Sikhs – The Golden Temple. The attack was comprehended as an assault on the sentiments of Sikhs. According to the reports, the attack resulted in the death of 492 civilians. As an act of retaliation, four months later, on October 31, Indira Gandhi was assassinated by her two Sikh bodyguards – Satwant Singh and Beant Singh. The events that followed her assassination mark one of the darkest periods of modern Indian history. The anti-Sikh riots began, and thereafter India witnessed a cleansing of Sikhs from its soil. The Sikh genocide lasted for three days. Almost 3000 Sikhs were allegedly slaughtered in Delhi. The violence against the Sikh community ended with thousands and thousands of casualties. Nearly 20,000 people were forced to flee in order to save their lives, and thus the violence against the community resulted in the displacement of the masses. The shops, houses, and properties of Sikh owners were openly set on fire. Many had moved out of areas they resettled in, but the scars and memories of that traumatic event still remain in the minds of the affected.

In a similar vein of insurgency, Northeast India has long been the core of ethnic, communal and cultural violence since India's independence. What increases the sensitivity of this area is its geopolitical location which is inhabited by diverse ethnic groups. The beautiful states might look so from a distance but in reality, they have a volatile environment which shakes the overall peace of its people. Specifically, Assam and Nagaland have unexpectedly undergone a series of agitation over past seven decades. Nagaland insurgency is the oldest insurgency in India. Naga Club was formed to claim complete freedom from the Indian mainland. In 1946, Naga Club reorganized itself to Naga National Council (NNC) under the leadership of Angami Zapo Phizo.

Similarly, the ULFA (United Liberation Front of Asom) organization is a dominant militant group in Assam. It was formed on April 7, 1979 and aimed to gain its own autonomy from the Indian

mainland. Amidst the political instability in Assam and Nagaland, it is the common man who has suffered the most. Women were brutally raped and tortured openly by Indian soldiers. They were forced to give birth in public areas. The armed conflict in the region also led to mass destruction, the collapse of human rights and the disintegration of society. People lived in jungles and other refugee camps. Children were sent to orphanages to provide them with a safer environment. People who witnessed and survived these agitations still live under the strain of their past. It is difficult for them to lead a life of normalcy because the conflict and violence have impacted people emotionally and psychologically.

Incidents like the persistent violence in Kashmir, the1984 anti-Sikh riots, and ethnic and communal tensions in North-eastern states have poignant impacts on the community who has experienced it. The wave of terror and violence may come and subside, but its psychological and emotional reverberation in the minds of people remains alive for a longer time. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is one of the significant outcomes of communal riots and violence. Studies conducted by psychologists have shown that the community's exposure to violence and riots has led them to display trauma symptoms. Trauma survivors either never tell anyone about their ordeal or take a very long time to do so. There are numerous reasons for this including shame, the stigma of being perceived as a 'victim,' or fear of being blamed. Due to experiencing sustained and chronic violence, the effects get deeply imprinted on an individual's mind.

Stanford psychiatrist Shaili Jain, an expert on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder gives an overview of her family history. Her grandfather was murdered during the partition of 1947 when her father was ten years old at that time. He was forced into child labour to sustain his life. In her recent book, *The Unspeakable Mind: Stories of Trauma and Healing from the Frontlines of PTSD Science*, she writes, “Trauma often represents the violation of all we hold to be dear and sacred. Such events are simply too terrible to utter aloud and hence they become unspeakable… Sometimes the survivor wishes to speak, but the wider community is unwilling or unable to bear witness to their story, so the survivor is forced into silence”.

Nonetheless, trauma survivors possess a strong urge to tell their stories of misery to the world. Their testimonies and claims help them to come out of their traumatic state. In most cases, survivors

are time and again haunted by the distressful event. It haunts them in the form of repeated flashbacks and nightmares. Therefore, survivors usually find ways to tell and retell their accounts of pain and agony.

At times when the usual, ordinary, or normal rhythm of life gets disturbed by something unusual or extraordinary, it opens room for great literary masterpieces to flourish. Writers turn to literature to vent out the powerful emotions they experience at the time of the atrocity. They emerge as representatives of their specific communities in order to narrate the trauma their communities undergo.

Indian writings in English have produced a plethora of texts based on various traumatic events in India. Chaman Nahal (1927-2013), an Indian writer has contributed heavily to the domain of Partition literature in India. In his book, *Azadi* (1975) Nahal shows the horrors of the partition through the eyes of his protagonist Lala Kashi Ram. He depicts how the peaceful lives of the people were abruptly distorted after the partition was announced. Salman Rushdie (born 1947), a writer born in India also expresses his sensitivity towards the nation. His well-acclaimed book, *Midnight's Children* (1981) is based on the trauma of its protagonist Saleem due to India's transition from British colonial rule to freedom followed by the Partition. Other writers such as Bhisham Sahani, Krishna Baldev Vaid, Nisid Hajari, etc. have also written about their own traumatic experiences during the Partition and those of others.

Trauma accounts in Indian writings in English have also emerged from the Kashmir valley which witnessed the traumatic exodus of Kashmiri Pandits in 1989 and 1990. Writers like Rahul Pandita, Siddhartha Gigoo, Sandeep Raina, K. L Chowdhary, etc. came forward to write about the anguish and pain of Kashmiri Pandits during their exile. Rahul Pandita's *Our Moon has Blood Clots* (2013) is the first memoir on Kashmiri Pandits which testifies to the trauma that was inflicted on the people who were dragged out of their land.

The proposed study aims to probe into the nature and representation of trauma in the following literary works with reference to the concepts of Cathy Caruth's Trauma Theory:

1. *The Garden of Solitude* (2011) by Siddhartha Gigoo
2. *The Half Mother* (2014) by Shahnaz Bashir

3. *Helium* (2013) by Jaspreet Singh
4. *Night of the Restless Spirits* (2020) by Sarbpreet Singh
5. *The Story of Felanee* (2011) by Arupa Patangia Kalita
6. *Bitter Wormwood* (2013) by Eastrine Kire

Siddhartha Gigoo is a Kashmiri Pandit writer who was born in 1974 in Srinagar, Kashmir. Along with many others, Gigoo's family was the victim of forced exile in the 1990s. His book *The Garden of Solitude* (2011) is a tale of a young pandit named Sridar and his family, who are ripped apart as they forcefully leave the valley. Much like other pandits, they spend their remaining lives in Jammu feeling traumatised and alienated. They find shelter in tents, temples, and schools in Jammu. The novel is partly autobiographical because Gigoo's family also migrated to Jammu during their exile. From spending his childhood in the tranquil valley to seeing the destruction pave its way, Gigoo has seen it all. In an interview with Dr. Deepa Mishra, Gigoo says, "Then in the winter of 1989, things changed when the militancy erupted. In our locality, the Pandits feared that the uprising and the militancy might lead to a 'divide' and that they would be targeted. I witnessed the bizarre events unfold day by day." While recounting his experiences through Sridar's character, Gigoo paints the story of pain, fear, agony, and misery amidst the political turmoil. The novel showcases the pitiable and perishable condition of Kashmiri pandits during the militancy which ultimately leads to trauma.

Shahnaz Bashir is a Kashmiri writer who shows violence and turbulence in his debut novel *The Half Mother* (2014). Bashir was born and brought up in Srinagar, Kashmir. He is a writer and currently, a teaching associate in Communication at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Earlier, he also taught journalistic writing at the Central University of Kashmir, Srinagar. Bashir, being a Kashmiri, has witnessed the transition of the Kashmir valley from a tranquil state to a disastrous sight. During the release of his debut novel, Bashir in an interview with *The Dispatch* remarked, "In this strife-torn valley, I have always been tormented by feelings of indefinite and eternal uncertainty. *The Half Mother* is an outcome of those feelings. We all have heard the stories of Half-widows in Kashmir, those whose husbands never came back once they were arrested by Forces.

The Half Mother tries to paint the other side of the picture." The novel is set in the Kashmir Valley, torn by strife. It is a story of a mother, Haleema, who searches for her disappeared son Imran. Haleema stands for a thousand lonely women, traumatised and tormented by losing their loved ones amidst bitter violence. Not only this, the novel also addresses the issue of forced disappearances and its impact on family members. In the form of fiction, Bashir attempts to shape the narrative with gruesome realities of the lives of Kashmiris.

Jaspreet Singh is a writer who grew up in Punjab and other parts of India and moved to Canada in 1990. In 1998, he received his doctoral degree in Chemical Engineering. Two years after completing his doctorate, he decided to become a full-time writer. Singh is a skilled writer whose powerful narration has surfaced in his novel, *Helium* (2013). The novel describes the event which unravels itself after the assassination of the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Raj, the protagonist returns from an educational trip with his Chemistry Teacher, Professor Singh. As they arrive at the New Delhi station, they witness a frenzied mob surrounding Prof Singh. The mob throws a tyre around Prof Singh's neck and set him on fire. Thus, the novel paints the traumatic picture of Raj, Prof Singh's student who bears witness to such a heinous sight. Jaspreet Singh crafts a compelling account of largely an untouched moment in Indian history.

In contemporary Indian fiction in English, short stories have always formed an integral part of the literary landscape. The efficacy of short stories is as great as that of novels when it comes to providing social, cultural, historical, and psychological insights. Therefore, to expand the scope of the proposed study one short story collection has also been taken into consideration. *Night of the Restless Spirits* (2020) by Sarbpreet Singh is one such collection of short stories based on the fictionalized version of actual happenings. The book explores the far-reaching effects of the massacre against the Sikhs. The author shows the events of 1984 through the prism of many lives. He brings forth the psychological effects of the violence not only on the targeted community but also on other communities as well. Violence against the community tears society's social fabric and Singh exemplifies the same in his book. He presents the trauma of children who lost their parents during the riots. Singh was a 24-year-old engineering student at the time of the attacks.

In an interview with *The Hindu,* Sarbpreet Singh admits that writing this book was cathartic and he hopes the book "mitigates the numbness that society has against minorities; that the voices of the stifled and subdued are given a just hearing, that we learn from the past and such horrors are not repeated."

In the above-mentioned short story collection, a single theme has been dealt with in each short story in greater depth, giving the readers better insights into the issue. A variety of themes have been incorporated like violence, survivor's guilt, trauma, betrayal, mob mentality, strained relationships, etc. Therefore, the inclusion of short stories in the proposed study would widen the scope of the proposed study and give researchers an opportunity to explore trauma from several dimensions thereby making the study richer and deeper.

Literature has sprung from the writers of Northeast India who have witnessed the turmoil against their land. One such prominent Assamese writer is Arupa Patangia Kalita, born in 1956 in Golaghat, Assam. She is widely known for her short stories and fiction. She won the Sahitya Academy Award in 2014 for her short stories written in Assamese, *Mariam Austin Othoba Hira Barua*. Her books have been translated into Hindi, English and Bengali. Her works reveal her sheer sensitivity toward human suffering. However, her interest lies explicitly in bringing forth the sufferings of women in the wake of agitation and violence in Assam. Her novel, *The Story of Felanee* (2011), was originally written in Assamese and was later translated into English by Deepika Phukan. The book is set in the backdrop of conflict-ridden Assam. It revolves around a woman who lives her life surrounded and affected by the fierce conflict between the ethnic-Assamese desiring complete dominance and the Bodos claiming a separate state. The book portrays the traumatized soul of Felanee, who has witnessed her village burning and her husband dying amidst the violence.

Easterine Kire, born in 1969, is another powerful voice from Northeast India. Kire hails from Nagaland and has become the first Naga writer to write in the English language. She has written several books in English including short story and poetry collections. Currently, Kire lives in northern Norway but her writings are centered on the Naga people and their lived realities in the conflict-ridden land. Her novel, *Bitter Wormwood* (2013) is set in Kohima. It is a gripping account of a man's journey from 1937 to 2007 during Nagaland's struggle for independence. Written from an insider's

viewpoint, the novel throws insights into the turmoil and struggle in the lives of the people of the Northeast that causes trauma for the years to come. Outwardly, the book is about the Nagas' efforts towards autonomy against India but inwardly, it is a portrayal of internal suffering and trauma caused due to external factors. Mose, a young boy who loses his father and then his innocent grandmother amidst the violence is deeply traumatized. He bears witness to thousands of killings and bloodshed in his entire life. The book is a fine masterpiece that shows the vulnerability of the common masses.

The proposed study aims to demonstrate how trauma manifests itself in different forms in literature. The writers 'make up' the story only to convey the truth of life. As Niel Gaiman in his speech "Why our Future Depends on Libraries, Reading, and Daydreaming" puts it, 'fiction is a lie that can help us understand the truth, after all". Fiction is not merely the presentation of a story or characters; rather it represents the world in which we live. Thus, trauma studies also engage in exploring the impact of trauma in literature and society by delving deep into its psychological, sociological and cultural significance.

Since Trauma Theory has broad applicability in literature, it has drawn the attention of many literary scholars. The literature review reveals some interesting studies that have been undertaken by scholars of literature in the field of trauma studies and selected literary works. For instance, a paper entitled *Remember, Recover: Trauma and Transgenerational Negotiations with the Indian Partition in This Side, That Side and the 1947 Partition Archive*, published in 2015 by Ritika Singh of Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi explores trauma in terms of partition. She looks at the role and function of the "1947 Partition Archive" that aims to record the oral testimonies of witnesses.

Similarly, a research paper entitled *Re-Negotiating the Trauma Theory in Select Partition Novels* published in the year 2022 by B. G. Uma Maheswary and A. Lourdusamy of Srinivas University aims to explore the dynamics of trauma that are prevalent in the select partition novels in Indian English Literature. The paper also studies the traumatic effects of partition on the psyche of the characters.

In 2014, an article was published in "International Journal of English Language, Literature and Humanities" entitled *Violence and Marginalization of Women in Arupa Patangia Kalita's The Story of Felanee* by Mompi Choudhury. It explores the impact of violence against Assamese women during

the time of crisis. The article also discusses the experiences and personal losses of the protagonist, Felanee, in the wake of violence.

A research article entitled *Chronicle of Pain: The Half Mother Through Resistance Discourse* published in "Research Journal of English Language and Literature" in the year 2018 by Jan Mohmad Pandit explores the prolonged silence of mothers whose sons have undergone forced disappearance. The paper makes an analysis of the pain, suffering, torture and confusion of a Kashmiri mother who only waits and longs to be united with her son.

Bitter Wormwood by Easterine Kire has been analysed from an ecological perspective by S. Robin Stanly and Dr. R. Vasuhi. Their paper titled *Annihilation of Nature: A Critical Analysis in Easterine Kire's Bitter Worm Wood* was published in 2019 in "The Journal for English Language and Literary Studies". Their research aims at studying the factors that led to the deterioration of nature in Nagaland amidst the political turmoil.

An essay entitled "Between the Borders of Forgetting and Remembering: An Analysis of *Bitter Wormwood* by Easterine Kire and *Drums for Rancas* by Manuel Scorza" (2020) was published in the book *Displacement and Citizenship- Histories and Memories of Exclusion* by Lipi Biswas Sen studies the struggle which communities undergo due to their repressed memories. The paper specifically analyses the struggles of the people living at the borders of Indian and Peruvian states.

The trauma narratives have indeed captured the interest of various research scholars and critics. Within the domain of Indian literature in English, various texts of partition literature have been analysed by scholars under the framework of Trauma Theory. However, the survey reveals that the selected literary texts have not been placed within the framework of Cathy Caruth's Trauma Theory.

The proposed study marks a point of departure from the aforementioned seminal research works in the domain of trauma studies in the literature. It is hoped that the proposed study would add a new dimension to the ongoing research in trauma studies in the literature. The study would also provide the analysis of the selected texts within the framework of Cathy Caruth's Trauma Theory. With appropriate and concrete illustrations from the selected works, the study would attempt to make an in-depth exploration of the concepts and principles as advocated by Caruth in her Trauma Theory. Such a study would not only provide a detailed analysis of the effect of insurgencies on the common

masses of India, but it would also yield new results as it aims to bring forth the literary tradition of the east and west, thus making it a cross-cultural study.

The objectives of the proposed study would be:

1. To examine trauma, its forms and manifestations with an analysis of prominent models of Trauma Theory in the domain of Trauma Studies.
2. To make an in-depth analysis of Cathy Caruth's Trauma Theory.
3. To apply Cathy Caruth's Trauma Theory to the selected literary texts.
4. To compare and contrast the selected literary works from thematic and stylistic perspectives.
5. To study the relevance and scope of Trauma Theory in literary studies.

In the light of the above-mentioned objectives, the tentative chapter scheme of the proposed study would be as follows:

Chapter 1 – Introduction

Part A: Trauma Studies

Part B: Cathy Caruth's Trauma Theory

Chapter 2 – Narratives of Pain and Trauma: A Study of *The Garden of Solitude* and *The Half Mother*

Chapter 3 – Revisiting the Past: A Study of *Helium* and *Night of the Restless Spirits*

Chapter 4 – Saga of Survival: A study of *The Story of Felanee* and *Bitter Wormwood*

Chapter 5 – Selected Trauma Narratives: A Comparative Study

Chapter 6 – Conclusion

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